

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

SECRET

INFORMATION  
December 13, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARY KISSINGER

FROM: JAN M. LODAL *ml*  
SUBJECT: Operational Testing of Minuteman

*AK*

Bill Clements has written to inform you (Tab A) of his plan for notifying concerned government agencies, Congressional Committees and State officials of the Minuteman launchers from operational silos scheduled for next winter.

Clements' letter is strictly for information and you need not reply.

OSD REVIEWED 15-Mar-2011: NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION.

DOS REVIEWED 16 MAR 2011 NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION

SECRET - GDS

Classified by Dep Sec Def

~~SECRET~~THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

8 DEC 1973

Honorable Henry Kissinger  
Assistant to the President for  
National Security Affairs  
The White House

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Dear Henry:

Recently you advised me of your concurrence in our plan to conduct an operational launch of the Minuteman missile during the winter of 1974-75. We are proceeding with the actions necessary to permit this launch. An important part of these actions is our notifications to the affected Congressional Committees, Members of Congress and Governors of States concerned. I have enclosed examples of the types of letters that we will send to each of these audiences.

In addition to the notification effected through these letters we will of course have a complete public relations plan. Our general course of action will be -- in brief -- to first advise our four functional committees and then to proceed with notification to other Members of Congress, Governors and the public, with the last three notifications probably occurring on the same day. It is important that we take these actions prior to the Congressional recess which will probably begin December 22nd. It is my hope that I can reach the four Committee Chairmen sometime next week.

This demonstration program will be of interest not only to the Department of Defense and the National Security Council, but also to the Department of the Interior since our park lands will be involved; to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the environmental considerations and also to the State Department even though no foreign country will be overflowed during this test. I will be in touch with both the Interior Department and EPA prior to our public release on this demonstration program. I have also forwarded documentation to you as Secretary of State.

Sincerely,

Bill

William P. Clements, Jr.

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Enclosures

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Classified by DepSecDef  
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION SCHEDULE OF  
EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652. AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED  
AT TWO YEAR INTERVALS. DECLASSIFIED ON 12/31/1981

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

(To Committee Chairmen)

Honorable John C. Stennis  
Chairman, Committee on  
Armed Services  
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This is to inform you that I have authorized the Air Force to proceed with the planning and preliminary actions necessary to conduct an operational demonstration of the Minuteman Missile System in the winter of 1974-75.

In Fiscal Year 1971, approximately \$31M was included in the DOD budget request to provide funds to begin the preparations necessary to conduct test launches of Minuteman missiles from operational silos. Following Congressional deliberations on the matter, the House Appropriations Committee, in its Conference Report, recommended that only \$10.5M be approved for the "Operational Base Launch Program," and that the funds be used only for equipment at Vandenberg Air Force Base, California; and improvement of the Western Test Range, rather than for direct use in the Operational Base Launch Program. The Conference Report did note however, that "the conferees are in agreement that if a firm decision is made that such firings are required and will be conducted, consideration will be given to a budget request in a future fiscal year." In compliance with Congress' instructions, the \$10.5M appropriated in Fiscal Year 1971 was used to develop and test operational base launch equipment at Vandenberg Air Force Base. Included were two demonstration launches from Vandenberg, one in which the missile was flown to its full range and a second in which the destruct system was exercised after 50 seconds of flight. In view of the success experienced with the operational base launch safety equipment, and following a careful review of the current plan for conducting test launches from operational silos, I have authorized the Air Force to proceed with the planning for operational base launches next winter.

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The Minuteman System makes a unique and crucial contribution to our strategic deterrent force. This highly accurate system provides the nation with its largest number of alert missiles and has a responsiveness not shared by any other component of our strategic deterrent force. These characteristics of a land based ICBM force are fully recognized by the Soviet Union through their extensive deployment and their aggressive research and development program directed toward major technological improvement and significant increase in their force effectiveness.

With any weapons system it is important to demonstrate its capabilities under the most realistic conditions possible. This demonstrates to friends, allies, and potential adversaries that the system possesses the deterrent capability we seek. Other components of our strategic forces are frequently tested from operational facilities. The Soviets have routinely tested their strategic systems, including land based ICBMs, from both research and development sites and operational silos. Since the opening of the SALT negotiations in November 1969, it appears that the normally accepted Soviet method of conducting ICBM tests has been from operational silos.

Our Minuteman System has been extensively tested through actual launches from our testing site at Vandenberg Air Force Base, California, and through simulated launch tests in operational silos. During the past year, we have launched 12 Minuteman missiles. The results have been highly successful and have confirmed our confidence in the system. Although these tests are important, the launch conditions at Vandenberg do not exactly duplicate those found at operational facilities. An operational base launch program will expand the information gained at Vandenberg by demonstrating the performance of the missile and its ground equipment, and by verifying launch procedures in an operational, rather than test, environment. As the Soviets have repeatedly demonstrated a capability to launch missiles from operational silos, it would be of benefit to demonstrate our capability in an equally convincing way.

The Air Force demonstration program will utilize Minuteman II missiles, less their warheads, launched from operational silos at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana. This program is known as "Operational Base Launch" (OBL) and is nicknamed Giant Patriot. I regard this test to be extremely important for our national security as it will provide a clear demonstration of the effectiveness of our deterrent forces.

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The Air Force is prepared to brief you and/or members of your staff on this program, and to describe the extensive safety precautions that will be taken. Funds totaling \$20.6 million for this program are being requested in the Fiscal Year 1975 Budget. Necessary preparatory actions costing \$6.3 million during FY 1974 can, if you agree, be accommodated within available appropriations. A draft environmental impact statement will be furnished to the Committees concerned prior to Fiscal Year 1975 Budget Hearings related to this project.

I would appreciate your support of this demonstration program that will make such an important contribution to the national strategic deterrent capability by which we prevent nuclear war.

Sincerely,

**SECRET**

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

(For Congressman Other Than  
Committee Members)

Honorable Frank Church  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Church:

This is to inform you that I have authorized the Air Force to proceed with the planning and preliminary actions necessary to conduct an operational demonstration of the Minuteman Missile System in the winter of 1974-75.

The Minuteman System makes a unique and crucial contribution to our strategic deterrent force. This highly accurate system provides the nation with its largest number of alert missiles and has a responsiveness not shared by any other component of our strategic deterrent force. These characteristics of a land based ICBM force are fully recognized by the Soviet Union through their extensive deployment and their aggressive research and development program directed toward major technological improvement and significant increase in their force effectiveness.

With any weapons system it is important to demonstrate its capabilities under the most realistic conditions possible. This demonstrates to friends, allies and potential adversaries that the system possesses the deterrent capability we seek. Other components of our strategic forces are frequently tested from operational facilities. The Soviets have routinely tested their strategic systems, including land based ICBMs, from both research and development sites and more importantly--from their operational silos.

Our Minuteman System has been extensively tested through actual launches from our testing site at Vandenberg Air Force Base, California, and through simulated launch tests in operational silos. Although these tests are important, the launch conditions at Vandenberg do not exactly duplicate those found at operational facilities. An operational base

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launch program will expand the information gained at Vandenberg by demonstrating the performance of the missile and its ground equipment, and by verifying launch procedures in an operational, rather than test, environment. The Soviets have repeatedly demonstrated a capability to launch missiles from operational silos. It would be of benefit to demonstrate our capability in an equally convincing way.

The Air Force demonstration program will utilize Minuteman II missiles, less their warheads, launched from operational silos at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana. Since the space trajectory of this demonstration will pass over your state, I wanted you to be aware of this test at the earliest possible date. You should also be aware that, dependent on the final selection of launch facilities, some debris from the missile (a normal occurrence during missile staging) will come to earth in a limited area of Idaho. There is a high probability that the debris will impact on federal property. Our plans have given particular attention to assuring that this debris will present no hazard to any residents of the state or to federal property. A draft environmental impact statement will be furnished to the Committees concerned prior to FY 75 Budget Hearings related to this project.

We would like to have the opportunity to discuss this matter--and the exhaustive safety precautions planned--with you in detail to assure that you are fully informed and to respond to any questions you may have. We will be happy to arrange a detailed briefing for you and/or your staff and, if you desire, Dr. John L. McLucas, Secretary of the Air Force, would be pleased to meet with you.

I would appreciate your support of this demonstration program that will make such an important contribution to the national strategic deterrent capability by which we prevent nuclear war.

Sincerely,

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

(Montana Delegation including  
Governor Judge)

Honorable Michael J. Mansfield  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Mansfield:

This is to inform you that I have authorized the Air Force to proceed with the planning and preliminary actions necessary to conduct an operational demonstration of the Minuteman Missile System in the winter of 1974-75.

The Minuteman System makes a unique and crucial contribution to our strategic deterrent force. This highly accurate system provides the nation with its largest number of alert missiles and has a responsiveness not shared by any other component of our strategic deterrent force. These characteristics of a land based ICBM force are fully recognized by the Soviet Union through their extensive deployment and their aggressive research and development program directed toward major technological improvement and significant increase in their force effectiveness.

With any weapons system it is important to demonstrate its capabilities under the most realistic conditions possible. This demonstrates to friends, allies, and potential adversaries that the system possesses the deterrent capability we seek. Other components of our strategic forces are frequently tested from operational facilities. The Soviets have routinely tested their strategic systems, including land based ICBMs, from both research and development sites and more importantly--from their operational silos.

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The Air Force demonstration program will utilize Minuteman II missiles, less their warheads, launched from operational silos at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana. The missile complex at Malmstrom was selected for these tests primarily because of its geographical area, which provides the safest trajectory for a missile as it passes through space over the Continental United States enroute to the target area. In the near future, preparatory actions will begin in the form of site surveys for the purpose of identifying the specific launch facilities from which the tests will be conducted. A draft environmental impact statement will be furnished to the Congressional Committees concerned prior to FY 1975 Budget Hearings related to this project.

We would like to have the opportunity to discuss this matter--and the exhaustive safety precautions planned--with you in detail to assure that you are fully informed and to respond to any questions you may have. We will be happy to arrange a detailed briefing for you and/or your staff and, if you desire, Dr. John L. McLucas, Secretary of the Air Force, would be pleased to meet with you.

I would appreciate your support of this demonstration program that will make such an important contribution to the national strategic deterrent capability by which we prevent nuclear war.

Sincerely,

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

(Letter to Governors)

Honorable Cecil D. Andrus  
Governor of Idaho  
Boise, Idaho 83702

Dear Governor Andrus:

The President has asked that I inform you of his approval of a Department of Defense plan to conduct an operational demonstration of the Minuteman Missile System in the winter of 1974-75.

The Minuteman System makes a unique and crucial contribution to our strategic deterrent force. This highly accurate system provides the nation with its largest number of alert missiles and has a responsiveness not shared by any other component of our strategic deterrent force. These characteristics of a land based ICBM force are fully recognized by the Soviet Union through their extensive deployment and their aggressive research and development program directed toward major technological improvement and significant increase in their force effectiveness.

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and by verifying launch procedures in an operational, rather than test, environment. The Soviets have repeatedly demonstrated a capability to launch missiles from operational silos. It would be of benefit to demonstrate our capability in an equally convincing way.

The Air Force demonstration program will utilize Minuteman II missiles, less their warheads, launched from operational silos at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana. Since the space trajectory of this demonstration will pass over your state, I wanted you to be aware of this test at the earliest possible date. You should also be aware that dependent on the final selection of launch facilities, some debris from the missile (a normal occurrence during missile staging) will come to earth in a limited area of Idaho. There is a high probability that the debris will impact on federal property. Our plans have given particular attention to assuring that this debris will present no hazard to any residents of the state or to federal property. A draft environmental impact statement will be furnished to the Congressional committees concerned prior to FY 1975 Budget Hearings related to this project.

We would like to have the opportunity to discuss this matter--and the exhaustive safety precautions planned--with you in detail to assure that you are fully informed and to respond to any questions you may have. Arrangements can be made for senior representatives of the Air Force to meet with you at your convenience, or, if you plan to visit Washington in the near future, Dr. John L. McLucas, Secretary of the Air Force, would be pleased to meet with you.

I would appreciate your support of this demonstration program that will make such an important contribution to the national strategic deterrent capability by which we prevent nuclear war.

Sincerely,